niddah, hallah and the kindling of the light [on Sabbath].[15] Have I transgressed in any of them?

But wilt give unto Thy handmaid a man-child. What is meant by 'a man-child'? Rab said: A man among men;[16] Samuel said: Seed that will anoint two men, namely, Saul and David; R. Johanan said: Seed that will be equal to two men, namely, Moses and Aaron, as it says, Moses and Aaron among His priests and Samuel among them that call upon His name;[17] the Rabbis say: Seed that will be merged among men.[18] When R. Dimi came [from Palestine] he explained this to mean: Neither too tall nor too short, neither too thin nor too corpulent,[19] neither too pale nor too red, neither overclever[20] nor stupid.

I am the woman that stood by thee here.[21] R. Joshua b. Levi said: From this we learn that it is forbidden to sit within four cubits of one saying Tefillah.[22] For this child I prayed.[23] R. Eleazar said: Samuel was guilty of giving a decision in the presence of his teacher; for it says, And when the bullock was slain, the child was brought to Eli.[24] Because the bullock was slain, did they bring the child to Eli? What it means is this. Eli said to them: Call a priest and let him come and kill [the animal]. When Samuel saw them looking for a priest to kill it, he said to them, Why do you go looking for a priest to kill it? The shechitah may be performed by a layman! They brought him to Eli, who asked him, How do you know this? He replied: Is it written, 'The priest shall kill'? It is written, The priests shall present [the blood]:[25] the office of the priest begins with the receiving of the blood, which shows that shechitah may be performed by a layman.[26] He said to him: You have spoken very well, but all the same you are guilty of giving a decision in the presence of your teacher, and whoever gives a decision in the presence of his teacher is liable to the death penalty. Thereupon Hannah came and cried before him: 'I am the woman that stood by thee here etc.'. He said to her: Let me punish him and I will pray to God and He will give thee a better one than this. She then said to him: 'For this child I prayed'.

Now Hannah, she spoke in[27] her heart.[28] R. Eleazar said in the name of R. Jose b. Zimra: She spoke concerning her heart. She said before Him: Sovereign of the Universe, among all the things that Thou hast created in a woman, Thou hast not created one without a purpose, eyes to see, ears to hear, a nose to smell, a mouth to speak, hands to do work, legs to walk with, breasts to give suck. These breasts that Thou hast put on my heart, are they not to give suck? Give me a son, so that I may suckle with them.

R. Eleazar also said in the name of R. Jose b. Zimra: If one keeps a fast on Sabbath,[29] a decree of seventy years standing against him is annulled;[30] yet all the same he is punished for neglecting to make the Sabbath a delight. What is his remedy? R. Nahman b. Isaac said: Let him keep another fast to atone for this one. R. Eleazar also said: Hannah spoke insolently[31] toward heaven, as it says, And Hannah prayed unto[32] the Lord.[33] This teaches that she spoke insolently toward heaven.

R. Eleazar also said: Elijah spoke insolently toward heaven, as it says, For Thou didst turn their heart backwards.[34] R. Samuel b. Isaac said: Whence do we know that the Holy One, blessed be He, gave Elijah right?

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(1) Ibid. 15.

(2) Lit., 'You have judged me in the scale of guilt and not of merit'.

(3) So lit. E.V. 'wicked woman'. V. Kid. 16.

(4) Deut. XIII, 14. E.V. 'certain base fellows'.

(5) I Sam. I, 17.

(6) Lit., 'appease him'.

(7) Ibid. 11.

(8) Lit., 'morsel' (sc. of bread).

(9) Ibid.